

Pol: Warn parents of superbug

A Brooklyn lawmaker wants to force city health officials to immediately notify school authorities as soon as pupils test positive for the deadly staph infection known as MRSA.

City Councilman Domenic Recchia will introduce a bill at tomorrow's Council meeting mandating that principals be called once health officials get laboratory confirmation of the virus.

Recchia, who represents Coney Island and Gravesend, said parents were "going crazy" after two kids were recently diagnosed with MRSA. But worse still, they found out from fellow parents.

"If the parents hadn't come forward, we would never have known," Recchia, who got the schools scrubbed down, said.

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, was responsible for last month's death of a 12-year-old Brooklyn High School student.

Besides that case, the so-called superbug has also cropped up in other schools around the area, including public schools in Queens and Brooklyn, and in districts on Long Island. *Frankie Edozien*

'Stepford' author dies

Ira Levin, whose novels include "Rosemary's Baby" and "The Stepford Wives," has died, his agent said yesterday.

Levin, 78, suffered a fatal heart attack in his Manhattan apartment Monday, Phyllis Westberg said.

The native New Yorker began working as a TV writer before finishing his first novel, "A Kiss Before Dying," a thriller that won the Edgar Allan Poe Award as the best first novel of 1953.

It wasn't until 14 years later that Levin completed his second novel, "Rosemary's Baby."

That book, "The Boys from Brazil" and "Sliver" were turned into Hollywood productions, and "The Stepford Wives" and "A Kiss Before Dying" were filmed twice.

Levin also wrote the Broadway hit "Deathtrap." *AP*

Chicago cardinal to head Catholics

BALTIMORE — Chicago's Francis Cardinal George, a defender of Catholic orthodoxy with extensive experience in Rome, was elected yesterday as president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

George won overwhelmingly in a vote at the fall meeting of the nation's bishops.

George succeeds Bishop William Skylstad, of Spokane, Wash. *AP*

BAD HAND IN POKER SLAYING



Seth Gottfried

Suspect goes free in time blunder

By AUSTIN FENNER and LAURA ITALIANO

A convicted killer who was the sole arrest in last week's Flatiron District poker-game slaying was sprung from jail yesterday after prosecutors failed to win a timely indictment.

By law, prosecutors had only 144 hours from suspect William Delvalle's arrest last Friday to convince a grand jury to indict.

That deadline had long since passed by the time Delvalle, 35, of The Bronx, had his latest court date late yesterday afternoon, leaving Manhattan Criminal Court Justice Evelyn LaPorte no choice but to order him released.

Prosecutors would not comment yesterday on why no in-

dictment was won against Delvalle. "He remains charged, and the investigation is continuing," said DA spokeswoman Barbara Thompson.

"I'm not happy," Kristine DeSena, widow of heist-victim Frank DeSena, said last night when told by The Post of Delvalle's release.

"If he's a dangerous person, he shouldn't be on the street," she said. "If they weren't able to go to the grand jury in a timely fashion, there must have been a good reason."

"I hope this guy doesn't do something again."

Delvalle was released because the case is reliant upon a single eyewitness identification, and is "extremely weak," maintained his lawyer, Bryan Konoski.

"There's nothing here — there's no meat on the bones," the lawyer said.

Delvalle served eight years prison for a callous, 1992 manslaughter in The Bronx in which he fired into a crowd of six people on East 163rd Street, fatally hitting 21-year-old bystander Shemique Coleman in the head.

His parole ended Oct. 12 — just weeks before three gunmen burst into a posh underground card parlor at 251 Fifth Ave. near 28th Street.

The Hollywood-style holdup netted \$100,000 for the thieves, and ended tragically for poker player DeSena, 55, of Wayne, NJ.

DeSena, a math teacher at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken who is the father of a

16-year-old son, would have celebrated his 22nd wedding anniversary last weekend.

DeSena died when one of the gunmen — cops said they did not believe it was Delvalle — dropped his shotgun. It fired accidentally as the gunman picked it up.

Also yesterday, DeSena's widow said she ultimately hopes the killers meet a gentler fate than her husband.

"Neither my husband nor I believe in the death penalty," she said, her voice choking up. "Life is valuable. I know that so much — I don't want to make the world any worse."

Additional reporting by Murray Weiss, Denise Buffa and Tim Perone

austin.fenner@nypost.com

'Perv' cleric, 83, loses priestly powers

An elderly Queens priest has been stripped of his powers as a cleric after Catholic officials found there was "sufficient evidence" that he sexually abused several boys 25 years ago.

The alleged assaults by the Rev. John Abrams occurred when he was pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Bayside, according to the Brooklyn Diocese, which oversees the parish.

Abrams, who turns 83 next month, served at Sacred Heart from 1979 until 1982, said diocese rep Frank DeRosa. After Abrams' stint at Sacred Heart, he served seven or eight years at St. Patrick's Church in Bayside.

Sometime after 2002 — when American bishops issued their "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" amid the church's burgeoning abuse scandal

— Abrams' alleged victims formally complained about him to the diocese.

Criminal charges were never filed against the priest.

Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio recently barred Abrams from presenting himself publicly as a priest, wearing clerical attire, celebrating Mass or administering the sacraments.

A letter from DiMarzio was read

during Masses on Nov. 3 and 4 at Sacred Heart.

"I sincerely apologize to the victims for the emotional sufferings endured by sexual abuse by a member of the clergy," he wrote.

The case now will be forwarded to the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which will decide Abrams' fate, including whether he should be removed from the priesthood. *Dan Mangan*